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HOW TO EXCEL

DWIGHT EDWARDS MARVIN

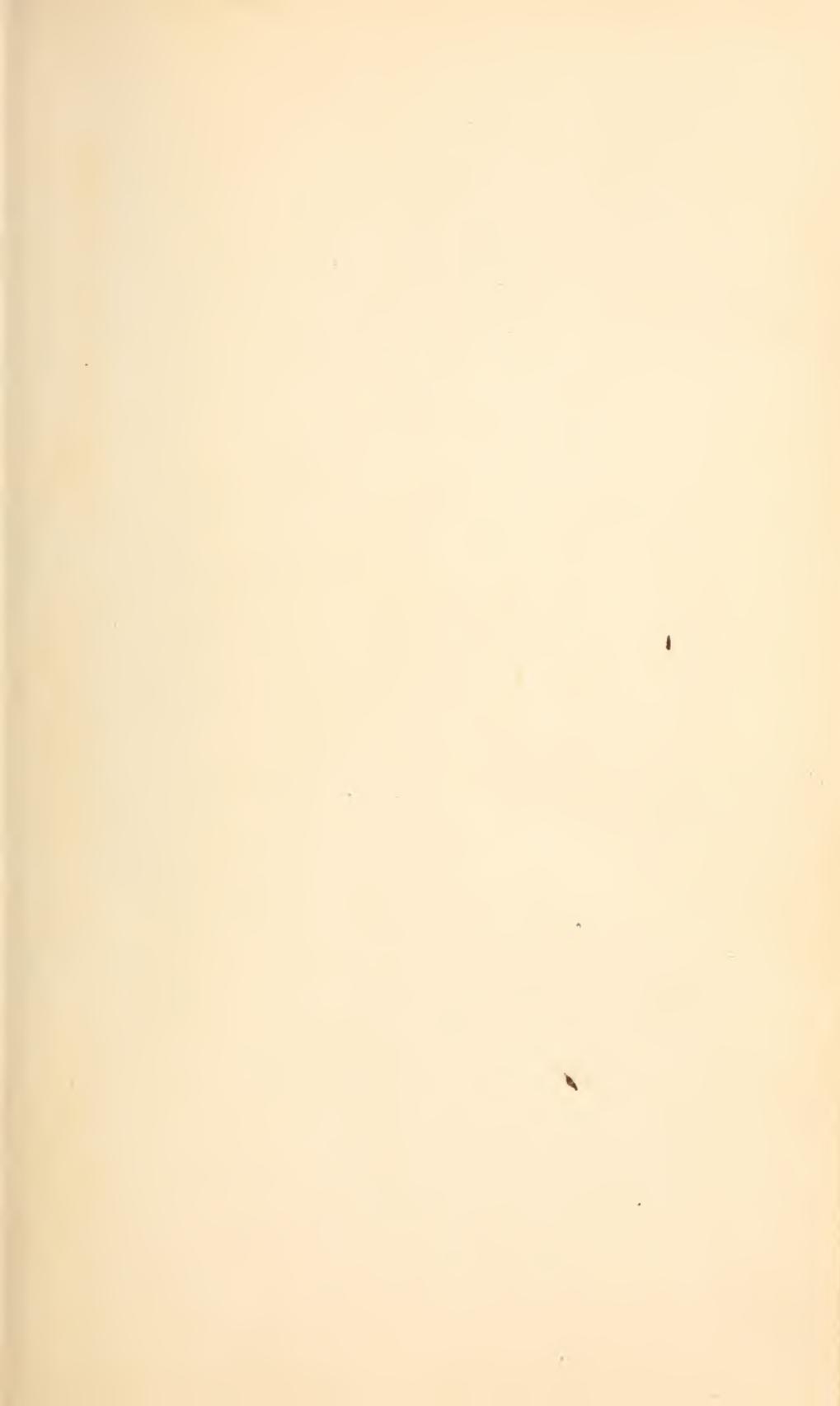


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HOW TO EXCEL

FOR TEACHERS IN
THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

BY

DWIGHT EDWARDS MARVIN



FREDERICK H. HITCHCOCK

NEW YORK

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TO
MY DAUGHTER CAROLINE

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PREREQUISITES

EARNESTNESS

Ernestness commands attention and impresses the mind. As the hammer drives the nail into the wood, so earnestness forces the truth into the heart. "The world," said F. W. Robertson, "is given as a prize to the man in earnest." Success is the reward of activity and zeal in Sunday School work. A gun may be well loaded and well aimed, but it will be ineffective until force is obtained sufficient to discharge its contents: so a Sunday School lesson that is well prepared may, through lack of earnestness, fail to produce a deep impression on the heart.

Ernestness is not an evidence of fanaticism; it is rather an evidence of inspiration. D. L. Moody was a great enthusiast and was glad to acknowl-

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edge the fact. "I have often prayed," said he, "that the Lord would let me die before enthusiasm died out of my soul." Many teachers never become proficient in their work because they would rather die of dignity than give enthusiasm a chance to show itself.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

"Whatsoever ye do, work heartily (from the soul), as unto the Lord and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ."

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FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

It is important that the Sunday School teacher should know Jesus Christ intimately before he introduces him to others. He needs the divine companionship as well as the divine commission. In Christian activities, human service and divine fellowship go together. He who labors for the kingdom of heaven has the King of heaven for his associate. "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself," neither can the Sunday School teacher produce results of himself. It is a great privilege to work for the Son of God, but it is a greater privilege to work with Him.

Fellowship is more than partnership; it is also comradeship. "Often, on waking in the morning after days of the most absorbing and affectionate study of the Great Life," wrote Eliza-

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beth Stuart Phelps, “the first conscious thought has been, ‘who was with me yesterday? What noble being entered my door? In what delightful, in what high society, have I been?’ I felt as if I had made a new, a supreme acquaintance.” Intimate association with Christ is the secret of power. To know Christ is to know the meaning of resistless love.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches;” said Jesus. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.”

PRAYER

Prayer is not a battering-ram with which to break down the walls of divine unwillingness; neither is it the indolent reiteration of wishes with a vague idea that, in some way, they may be gratified. “The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.”

“Prayer,” says an old proverb, “should be the key of the day and the lock of the night.” By it, the doors of opportunity are opened, the way of service is made known and success is secured. While no Christian would deny that prayer is essential to efficiency there are some Sunday School teachers who think that it is less important to receive the message of the lesson from God than from some man-made “lesson help.” Such teachers

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should ponder the words of Scripture, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.”

“I should be the most presumptuous blockhead upon this footstool,” said Abraham Lincoln, “if I, for one day, thought I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place without the aid and enlightenment of One who is stronger and wiser than all others.” How much greater blockhead is the Sunday School teacher who thinks that he can speak for God without communion with God.

“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

FORETHOUGHT

In lesson preparation, procrastination is not only the thief of a teacher's time; it is also the thief of his joy. He who tries to *make* ready when he should *be* ready, is apt to use moments that should be given to the preparation of his heart, to the cramming of his head, and so be compelled to go to his work unprepared. If any teacher is so driven by his daily toil that he has no time for specific study, let him think about the lesson and pray over it while engaged in labor. In that way he can be about his Father's business while he is carrying on his own business.

There is often more real preparation in thinking than in reading, though reading is of great importance. "A thinking man is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have:" said

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Thomas Carlyle, "every time such an one announces himself, I doubt not there runs a shudder through the nether empire; and new emissaries are trained with new tactics, to, if possible, entrap and hoodwink and handcuff him."

Opinions formed without consideration do not produce convictions; they only produce notions. Leonardo de Vinci meditated on his vision of the Last Supper before he permitted his brush to touch the walls of the old convent in Milan. John Wesley took time for thought before preaching his masterly sermons. John Bunyan reflected long in prison solitude before he told the story of Pilgrim's Progress. Printed helps are important to the Sunday School teacher but they cannot take the place of meditation.

The teacher who begins preparation early in the week gives himself time to think and gather material.

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“Oh how love I Thy law!” cried the Psalmist; “it is my meditation all the day. Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation.”

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METHOD

Much valuable time is wasted by haphazard preparation. Walking may be important to the traveler who longs for the warmth and comfort of his own fireside, but what matters it how much he walks if he does not keep to the road that leads to his home. It is not so much the time a teacher spends in preparation that counts, as the way he spends it.

Some Bible students translate Paul's admonition to Timothy thus: "Strive diligently to present thyself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line the word of truth." Let the teacher cut the word of truth that he intends to bring to his class along some straight line.

Ready-made plans for lesson prepara-

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tion are good, but, like ready-made clothing, they do not always fit. It is the privilege of every teacher to select his own method. Published methods are useful, but their usefulness is found in what they suggest more than in what they offer for adoption. "He who greases his wheel helps his oxen," even though the grease that he uses is taken from another man's pail.

Whatever plan a teacher employs, it should be his own, either created by himself for himself, or made his own by meditation. "There is only one real failure in life possible," said F. W. Farrar, "and that is, not to be true to the best one knows."

"Every scribe who hath been made a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

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VARIETY

There is nothing sinful in curiosity. In common with others, the Sunday School scholar wants to know things. When his curiosity is sufficient to make him anxious to know what his teacher has to say about the lesson, there will be little trouble in holding his attention.

Many teachers fail to interest because they have no surprises to stimulate the curiosity of their pupils. When a method of presenting truth is always the same, every boy or girl knows in a general way about what will be said and forthwith lapses into indifference. Drive a man constantly over the same road and he will become so familiar with the location of every house, barn, tree and fence, that he will need but a glance to tell him where he is. There

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being no surprises, he will be apt to settle back in his seat and take no interest in what is passing.

Teachers who complain of inattention from their scholars, should consider their manner of exposition and see whether they have not encouraged inattention by teaching in a groove. It is not fair to a pupil to expect him to keep out of the rut of indifference when his instructor is unable to keep out of the rut of a fixed teaching method.

There is a verse of an old song which runs thus:

“If I were a cobbler it would be my pride
The best of all cobblers to be;
If I were a tinker, no tinker beside
Should mend an old kettle like me.”

It would be well for every Sunday School teacher to modernize the rhyme and apply it to himself by saying:

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“If I am a worker, it will be my pride
 The best of all workers to be;
If I am a teacher no teacher beside
 Shall interest each pupil like me.”

“The Preacher sought to find out
acceptable words (words of delight)
and that which was written uprightly,
even words of truth.”

ADAPTATION

Every class is unlike every other class. It stands alone in character and need. To teach the members most effectively the leader in charge must know his pupils and adapt his instruction to their requirements. "Fit the foot to the shoe, not the shoe to the foot," as the people of Portugal say.

"I used to be drilled by a shrewd sergeant," remarked Amos R. Wells, "one of whose tricks was to command, 'Make ready—take aim—' and then would come a pause during which some impatient gun would be certain to go off. 'Vy don't you vinish aiming?' growled the sergeant." The Sunday School teacher should not attempt to shoot before he finishes aiming, no matter how well his gun may be loaded. He who would strike the target of the

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human heart must point his instruction in that direction.

St. Paul showed a true Christian spirit when he wrote about his purpose to adapt himself to the conditions of the Corinthians. Cranmer's quaint translation of his words is striking: "To the weake became I as weake, to wynne the weake. In all thinges I fasshyoned my selfe to all men, to save at the least waye some. And this I do for the Gospel's sake, that I myght have my parte thereof."

The Sunday School teacher, like the preacher of old, should seek to "find out acceptable words," and give diligence to present himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."

The words of the wise are not like arrows shot at random. They are like "goads; and as nails well fastened."

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ILLUSTRATION

A nail that is well driven holds fast, but a nail that is clinched holds faster. A lesson that is clearly stated and properly applied is apt to find a lodgment in the pupil's heart, but a lesson that is clinched by a forceful illustration is made sure by the pupil's memory.

Illustrations light up a lesson; truth, by them, is "made lustrous." Jesus taught the people by similitudes. Let the Sunday School teacher follow his example. If he is observant he will find plenty to meet his needs. Nature, art, history, biography, science, and daily life are full of them.

Hackneyed stories that are directly applicable may sometimes be found useful, though fresh ones are better, but improbable stories are never useful. Harrowing tales of suffering and death

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generally do more harm than good, and “Johnnie and Willie” anecdotes are insulting to the intelligence of the average boy or girl.

Some teachers seek to secure the attention of their pupils by the use of illustrations that do not illustrate. They will have interest at any cost, and a bright story answers their purpose even though it may not make the word of God more powerful. Unless the similitudes that a teacher uses in his explanations of the lesson make the meaning clearer to the minds of his pupils or open a way by which he can impress their hearts with the truth, they are nothing more than means of entertainment and are about as useful as mirrors in the sun that dazzle the eyes but do not reflect the face.

“All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them.”

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INTERROGATION

It is a common saying among the Italians that, "Asking costs little," but every faithful teacher knows that wise questions cost much thinking. Ready-made inquiries are dead until they are vitalized by thought. It is not fair to present a class with anything that is lifeless. The printed questions that are found in lesson helps are intended to aid study and not to be taken as substitutes for study. When used aright they are often wonderfully suggestive.

Teachers should seek to memorize the questions that they intend to ask. Inquiries are apt to be forceless when read from a slip of paper or open book, yet they are not always so. It is better to read and ask than not to ask at all. Crutches are useful even though

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they may be undesirable. They show weakness but they give strength. Jacob leaned on his staff when he passed over Jordan because he had walked far and was weary; he leaned again on his staff when he forded the brook Jabbok because an angel had touched him and he was worn with wrestling. The teacher who uses a crutch is often more efficient than one who does not. Let each, therefore, learn for himself where his strength lies.

A well-chosen inquiry clarifies thought, stimulates curiosity, and commands attention; but indifferent questions encourage listlessness. Catch questions should be used sparingly, if at all, for they are apt to divert the mind and cause embarrassment. Leading questions are useful as expedients in securing replies from dull or timid pupils.

When a scholar gives the wrong an-

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swer in ignorance of the right one, it is inconsiderate and unwise to bluntly inform him of the fact. Humiliating him is not the way to win him. It is better to utilize the wrong answer in throwing a side light on the lesson.

Every teacher should remember that, unless he is very clear in stating his questions, he may receive correct but irrelevant replies. When, therefore, an answer is right but different from that which was expected, the teacher should not blame his pupil, but seek thereafter to be more careful in the wording of his inquiries.

“Foolish and ignorant questionings refuse,” said the Apostle to Timothy, “knowing that they gender strifes.”

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APPEAL TO THE EYE

We are told that the hearts of children are more easily moved by what they see than by what they hear. The same is true of those who are older. Maps, charts, pictures, curios from Palestine and objects from nature are all helpful. The skilled instructor soon discovers that, when teaching, some material object that illustrates or explains is more useful than a lesson quarterly.

An old French proverb reads, "If you can't say it, point to it with your finger." When a teacher cannot describe a Bible scene, let him point to it in a picture; when he cannot explain a Jewish custom, let him point to some object that makes it plain; when he cannot fix the location of a district or town, mountain or river, let him point

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to it on the map; when he cannot make clear the meaning of a symbol, let him point to its explanation on a chart. It is by pointing that he is enabled to secure attention and reach the minds and hearts of those over whom he is placed.

A public speaker who was trying to interest a listless audience took a piece of chalk in his hand and touched a black-board. In an instant every one was alert and anxious to see what he would draw. A class is a small congregation and often needs a piece of chalk, or something in its place, to rouse interest, for the minds of the boys and girls are always curious to see as well as to hear. "Next to the Bible," says Amos R. Wells, "the Sunday School teacher's inseparable companion should be a lead pencil."

When Jesus taught the people about the Heavenly Father's care, He directed

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their attention to something that they could see, saying, “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

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EXALTATION OF CHRIST

Though the name of Christ is not mentioned in many Sunday School lessons, the spiritually minded teacher will always be able to find out some way to honor his Lord. The Gospel message is too large and too far reaching to be confined within the limits of the records made by the evangelists and apostles. Abraham rejoiced to see the day of the Lord and was glad, Jacob followed the course of history with prophetic vision till the coming of Shiloh, Moses beheld the Great Deliverer afar off, David sang of the Good Shepherd, Isaiah spoke of the Messiah's sacrificial death, and Daniel saw the kingdom of Heaven spread over all the earth.

Joseph Parker, writing of the whole Bible as a revelation of Jesus, says,

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“The creation means Christ; the promise to shattered man in Eden means Christ; the music of Israel’s sweetest harp means Christ; the light that gleams and burns in prophecy means Christ; the song of songs rolls its tender strain around Christ; the burdens of the later seers were burdens of Christ. No page did Christ disclaim; no prophet did Christ disown; He appropriated all names and figures and symbols of beauty; He was the Root and Offspring of David, He was the Bright and Morning Star, He was the Flower of Jesse and the Plant of Renown, He was the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, He was the Shepherd of the Flock, and the Redeemer of those who were in the hand of the enemy; He had not where to lay His head, yet He was perfumed with the powders of the merchants.”

Jesus Christ is the one great life-

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giving, upholding, illuminating leader of men, and teachers in the Sunday School are His appointed agents with inspired messages. Of them he says, "These are they which bear witness of me." It is important therefore that teachers should bear testimony to power and grace of their Lord.

"All may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent him."

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HOPEFULNESS

Discouragement weakens the will and robs the teacher of energy. D. L. Moody used to remind Christian workers that God never used a discouraged man to do any great thing for Him. He who makes friends of Mistrust and Timorous is sure to find lions in the way. It matters not that they are chained, he fails to see their fetters.

When not arising from ill-health or exhaustion, discouragement is dishonoring to God; yet there are some Christians who think that it is a mark of humility and therefore commendable.

In the Apostolic enumeration of the three virtues, faith, hope, and love, hope is placed between faith and love, for it roots itself in one and blossoms in the other.

Sunday School teachers generally

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become disheartened from looking at conditions from one point of view. They fix their attention on the difficulties of their work and turn them over in their mind until they seem almost unendurable; but fail to consider the proffered help of God that is more than sufficient for all their needs. “I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me,” said the Apostle.

It was a wise saying of Dr. Theodore Cuyler that, “There is no sunshine for those who persist in keeping their shutters barred. Joy is not gained by asking for it but by acting for it.”

A good prescription for the cure of what is known as “the blues” was once given by Samuel Longfellow, the brother of the poet: “Whatever it be,” said he, “that disorders, annoys, grieves you, makes life look dark and your heart dumbly ache or wets your eyes with bitter tears, look at it steadily,

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look at it deeply, look at it in the thought of God and His purpose of good, and already the pain of it will begin to cease.”

“To them that love God all things work together for good.”

“Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, for the help of His countenance.”

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CONFIDENCE

“He who would climb a ladder must begin at the bottom,” says an old German proverb. The first rung of the Sunday School teacher’s ladder of success is confidence in God. After honest endeavor he has a right to look for results even though they come not quickly. To labor on without expecting to accomplish anything is the height of foolishness.

Some one has said that “Faith without works is like a bird without wings.” It is also true that works without faith is like a bird without wings. Christians may be conscious of their shortcomings and inefficiency, but they should not forget that divine “power is made perfect in weakness” and do their best, praying for help and trusting God for results.

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Before Jesus called Lazarus from the grave, He lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest me, and I know that Thou hearest me always." By faith, He was sure of results before the results came. His was a triumphant faith with a certainty that would not admit the possibility of defeat. He followed his declaration of confidence by crying, "with a loud voice: 'Lazarus come forth' and he that was dead came forth."

Miracles that relieve from physical disease and pain are great, but miracles that bring salvation to the heart or perfect the soul in righteousness are greater. This fact should cause the teacher to rejoice in the promise of Christ that "greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto the Father."

Faith has been well defined as "grasp-

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ing Christ with the heart.” When the Christian lays hold of his God in holy confidence, his Lord will lay hold of him in love and strength and speak to him as he spoke to the Prophet of old, saying, “Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”

SUGGESTED STEPS

SUGGESTED STEPS

MEDITATE ON THE LESSON

In rendering Psalm cxix: 27, the Revised Version substitutes the word, "meditate," for "talk," so that the passage is translated, "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts, so shall I meditate on Thy wondrous works." Commenting on the verse Spurgeon remarked that, "none but foolish people will talk without thinking." The wise Sunday School teacher meditates first and talks afterwards. "To talk without thinking is to shoot without aiming."

That the teacher may have time to think, he should read the lesson early in the week. If, after reading it, he holds it in his memory and recalls it at intervals when about his work, he will find that it will reveal its spiritual significance to his mind in a way that

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cannot be secured by considering the printed expositions of others, no matter how good they may be.

“Taking out without putting in, soon comes to the bottom,” is a maxim worth repeating. No one is competent to instruct others who has not been instructed. To deliver God’s message the Christian must first receive it, so that it behooves every follower of Christ to sit at the feet of his Lord and keep his heart open to the influences of the Spirit.

The purpose of the Sunday School teacher today should be like that of the Psalmist of old who, in the richness of his faith, told God of his determination to keep in memory the divine testimonies.

“I will meditate on Thy precepts,” said he, “and have respect unto Thy ways. I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will not forget Thy Word.”

SUGGESTED STEPS

READ THE LESSON AGAIN WITH PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE

Having fastened the lesson in the mind and having had its meaning made clear to the heart, the teacher should next read it devotionally. Time spent in talking with God about the lesson is time multiplied. Important as study is, it is better to pray much and study little than pray little and study much.

“Praying to God and hitting with the hammer,” go together. Let the teacher, therefore, read the lesson again after a week of meditation, going over it verse by verse, slowly and reverently considering what he has learned of its spiritual meaning and purport. Almost every word will be found to be significant. Many that were passed over lightly during the week will be

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seen to have a new significance. It is a great mistake to think that the prayerful review of the assigned passage is nothing more than a soul elevating exercise. It is much more. By it the Christian enters into the very heart of the lesson and receives wisdom and strength.

Old John Bunyan was right in saying, "He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day," for running from the Almighty is the surest way of losing the desire to know Him in the richness of His grace.

When the two disciples welcomed the risen Christ to their company as they went on their way toward Emmaus they were ignorant of the blessing that was in store for them. In recalling His explanations of the Old Testament and their own experiences, they said, "Was not our heart burning within us

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while He spake to us in the way, while He opened to us the Scriptures." It is always so. The revelations of Jesus concerning the teachings of the Bible appeal not only to the mind but to the heart, and give wisdom that can be obtained in no other way.

SUGGESTED STEPS

CONSIDER THE LESSON BROADLY

Glancing over the lesson in a desultory way just before going to the class, is not preparation. Skimming can never be substituted for study any more than scraping the side of a mountain can take the place of deep mining.

It is well to own a Reference Bible and use it; it would be better to own a Bible containing a Text Book and Concordance, for a teacher should know, not only the relation of a lesson to its immediate context, but also to its remote context. He should search the Scriptures—all the Scriptures—that he may find therein explanations, illustrations, and suggestions.

The original Authorized Version of the Bible, otherwise known as “The King James Version” had some 8000 marginal references. Since 1611, many

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were added; some were irrelevant and of little help, others were of great value in throwing light on the text. Every passage inspired of God is of sufficient importance to be considered by the student if it, in any way, relates to the passage he is considering. "All scripture that was written by the Spirit," is the rendering of 2 Timothy iii: 16, 17 in the Syriac version of the New Testament, "is profitable for instruction, and for confutation, and for correction, and for erudition in righteousness; that the man of God may become perfect and complete for every good work."

It would be well, therefore, for every Sunday School teacher to take the advice of old Miles Coverdale (1535) who said, "It will greatly help you to understand scripture if you mark, not only what is written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where to, with what intent, under

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what circumstances, considering that which goes before and that which follows.”

“The word of God,” wherever it may be found, “is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

SUGGESTED STEPS

USE THE BEST LESSON HELPS

Should the Sunday School teacher use published lesson helps? Yes! "God gives every bird its food but He does not throw it into the nest." But lesson helps should not be used as substitutes for prayerful meditation and study.

The best teacher's library contains a good copy of the Bible, a Bible Dictionary, Commentary, Concordance, and Text Book. To these may be added with profit, a volume of carefully prepared notes on the current lessons, several of which are published annually, and a high grade teacher's periodical.

No teacher can afford to neglect the help of others. "The Ethiopian eunuch might have received divine illumination, and doubtless did receive it,"

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says Charles H. Spurgeon, "but still, when asked whether he understood the Scriptures which he read, he replied, 'How can I unless some man shall guide me?' The guiding man is needed still. Divines who have studied the Scriptures have left us great stores of holy thought which we do well to use."

In choosing lesson periodicals and quarterlies, those should be considered first that are issued by the publishing house of the denomination to which the school belongs and in which the teacher is working.

Loyalty to one's own branch of Christ's Church is to be commended, but not when efficiency has to be sacrificed. If the school does not provide the best helps, the teacher always has the privilege of subscribing for some periodical that he deems more valuable.

"He is not a good mason who refuses any stone," but he should seek

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to find the most perfect one for his use.

"If thou cry after discernment, and lift up thy voice for understanding," said Solomon, "if thou seek her as silver and search for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of Jehovah and find the knowledge of God."

SUGGESTED STEPS

GO TO THE CLASS WITH FAITH, JOY, AND ENTHUSIASM

“Stand firm, don’t flutter,” said Benjamin Franklin. It is fluttering that prevents achievement. A Sunday School worker may fret and fume in his search for efficiency and fail. Anxiety and restlessness will not aid him, but faith in God combined with an indomitable purpose will give him power. When a teacher has been faithful in the preparation of his lesson and has looked to heaven for help in trustful confidence, he has a right to assume that Jesus will be with him and bless him.

A Sunday School teacher’s education may be meager, his talents few, his physical strength limited, and he have difficulties that often tempt him to doubt his call; but he ought never

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to forget that God is great, that the promises of the Scripture are sure, and that no service rendered for Christ and with the spirit of Christ can be a failure. Moses halted in his speech but was a wonderful leader of men; Paul's bodily presence was weak and his speech was of no account but he was an impressive preacher, and the Sunday School teacher with few talents and a hard class to manage may have the presence and power of the Highest.

It is the privilege of every discouraged worker to stay his heart on the divine promises, wait on God, and listen until he hears a heavenly voice saying to him:

“I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause
thee to stand,
Upheld by My gracious, omnipotent hand.”

In view of the abiding presence of God and the sure word of promise, every teacher should go to his class with

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dauntless courage, joyous in the consciousness of his right as a messenger of Jesus Christ, and speak to those under his charge with sincerity and earnestness.

God says to every leader in the Sunday School as he said to Joshua of old, "Have not I commanded Thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

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IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO TEACH

The Sunday School teacher is a builder of kingdoms within a kingdom. His work is a help to others in the formation of character. So glorious is his calling and so royal is his service that he should not permit himself to look upon it as a task. The message that he delivers Sunday after Sunday is not only pure and holy but comprehensive and potent. God stands back of him and his teaching. If at times his work seems to be monotonous, it is only because he thinks it to be so. When he goes reluctantly to his class, being driven by a sense of duty, his pupils instinctively realize that he is under the lash of his conscience and they partake of his spirit. His burden becomes their burden.

A modern writer advises his readers

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to, "Sing a hallelujah and make a fresh beatitude, 'Blessed be drudgery.'" It may be that in the marts of trade such advice is necessary, but the Sunday School teacher should rather say, "Blessed is the work that is so transfigured that it ceases to be drudgery."

Translating a portion of Romans xii: 11, 12, William Tyndale rendered Paul's admonition thus, "Let not the busynes which ye have in hande be tedious to you. Be fervent in the sperete. Applye youre selves to the tyme. Rejoyce in hope." The worker that so transforms the business of lesson preparation and lesson teaching that it is no longer tedious must needs apply himself during the time of his appointed service, rejoicing in hope. "The joy of Jehovah," said Nehemiah to the people, "is your strength (your stronghold)."

SUCCESS IS NOT ACHIEVED WITHOUT
LABOR

He who imagines that he is so familiar with the Scriptures that he can teach without study deceives no one but himself. It is fresh preparation that yields fresh thought, and fresh thought that creates fresh interest. The man who depends on his "genius for teaching," shows by his dependence that he has no such genius. "He is a wise man who does not think himself wise."

It is a very common mistake to imagine that the "gift of continuance" is the same as the gift "for instruction." The old maxim, "Much chatter, little wit," is as true in the Sunday School as elsewhere. "Genius," said the poet Longfellow, "is infinite painstaking." It might be well for the teacher who thinks that he can fulfill his obligation

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without special preparation to commit to memory the old Oriental rhyme:

“Good striving
Brings thriving:
Better a dog that works
Than a lion that shirks.”

But there is another side to preparation. Unnecessary toil is irksome and confusing to the mind. To pay undue attention to trivial details and burden the memory with dates, figures, words, illustrations, etc., is worse than useless.

That the Sunday School teacher may prepare himself for his work, he should not only study the appointed lesson, but continually seek a more intimate acquaintance with God, a more constant fellowship with Christ, and a warmer love for the scholars under his care. Then will he be able to teach with grace and power, and be “approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”

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THE TEACHER SHOULD APPLY THE LESSON TO HIMSELF

Teaching involves more than exposition. The lesson is not merely a passage of scripture demanding explanation; it is also a message that requires to be delivered with the purpose of moving the conscience and will of those to whom it is spoken. To so deliver it, the teacher should apply the truth to his own heart. "First be trimmed thyself," was the direction of the Rabbis of old, "and then adorn thy brother." If the heart of the messenger has not received any message, how can he expect to deliver one to the hearts of others.

Spirit alone answereth to spirit. It may be true that "no one is wise enough to advise himself," but it is also true that no one is wise at all who

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does not apply his heart to receive advice from God. Judging from Paul's epistle to the Romans, there seems little doubt but that if he were writing to Sunday School teachers today he would say: "Thou that teachest another should not be selfish, or proud, or mean, or revengeful, or disobedient; art thou also selfish, or proud, or mean, or revengeful, or disobedient?"

Let the Christian worker ponder the words of the sainted Robert McCheyne who, speaking to preachers, said, "How diligent the cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp. Every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword, His instrument . . . In great measure, according to the purity and perfection of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

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May it not be truly said of some to-day as it was said of certain men of old, “When by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God.”

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IT IS ESSENTIAL TO BE OFTEN ALONE WITH GOD

Though Jesus possessed divine knowledge, He often turned aside to talk with God. We read that, "He went as was His wont to the Mount of Olives." The Mount of Olives was to Him the vestibule of His Father's house. There He met God and received help and strength, that He might return to the activities of life with renewed power and speak in the courts of the temple, the synagogues, the homes of the people, and on the hillsides with increased wisdom and grace. Knowing from experience the necessity and joy of fellowship with the unseen, He charged Christians to follow His example. "When thou prayest," said He, "enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy

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Father which is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompence thee."

In olden times, the Puritans would sometimes offer this excellent prayer in their Christian songs:

"My heart is but a rusty lock,
 Now oil it with Thy grace;
And rub it, rub it, rub it, Lord,
 Until I see Thy face."

The stanza, though but doggerel, is as appropriate for the Sunday School worker to-day as it was for men of old. He needs to reflect God in his life and teaching, as well as to speak for Him with the lips, and he cannot reflect Him without meeting Him at frequent intervals.

Spurgeon, referring to the Puritans, tells us that one of their number, at a certain debate, was observed writing on a piece of paper. As he was a preacher,

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some of his associates were anxious to know what he was writing so they drew near and looked at the paper but saw only these words repeated scores of times, "More light, Lord. More light, Lord." "A most suitable prayer for the student of the Word," observed Spurgeon in repeating the incident.

"I am the Light of the world," said Jesus, "he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." To Him should the teacher often go and in faith and sincerity repeat the prayer of the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

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POWER TO INTEREST A CLASS IS INSUFFICIENT

It is a great gift to be able to interest a class of restless boys or girls for one half hour or more, but interest is not the same as instruction. Intellectual sparkle may hold the attention but spiritual illumination is required to make the truth clear to the soul. "Glow worms are not lanterns," neither are glimmerings the same as shinings, and teachers should not fall into the error of thinking that they are successful because they are able to hold the interest of their pupils.

While "Horses are not judged by their bells and their trappings, but by their limbs and bone and blood," their bells and trappings serve an important purpose in calling the passing throng to observe the physical perfec-

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tion of the animals themselves. So Sunday School lessons are not to be judged by their adornments, these are only intended to attract the attention of the pupils, but by the value of the messages themselves.

The merchant puts novelties in his shop windows to catch the eyes of the people as they pass his door, but he does not care for gazers unless they become customers. In like manner the teacher will use expedients that he may better hold the attention of the pupils, but his thought will be fixed on the truth that he is trying to impress on their hearts.

The multitudes gathered about Jesus that they might see His wonderful works; being thus furnished with an audience He preached the word of life. When the Master told His disciples to follow Him, He promised them that He would make them “fishers of men.” They were fishermen and knew the

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devices employed by men of their craft to attract and secure the creatures of the sea. His promise, therefore, would naturally lead them to expect power both to draw and to impress the hearts of their fellowmen.

Winning is an important part of a teacher's work but it is only preliminary to a more important part. "He that is wise winneth souls," to himself, that he may lead them to God.

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W I N N I N G I S B E T T E R T H A N C O M - M A N D I N G

In Sunday School work, the leader is never a dictator but a friend. He does not command but allures. His strength is in guiding, not in driving. The persuasive word, "come," is to him more forceful than the coercive word, "go." In this respect he is like the Apostle Paul who wrote to Philemon, "Though I have all boldness in Christ to enjoin thee that which is befitting, yet for love's sake I rather beseech."

"Men will not bow down to crowned power nor philosophic power nor es-thetic power" says Newell Dwight Hillis, "but, in the presence of a great soul filled with vigor of imagination and glowing with love, men will do obeisance."

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The teacher can more easily win attention and good conduct by kindness and interest, than compel it by severity and chiding. It is the big brother who secures respect and not the big boss. The average healthy boy or girl resents a straight jacket unless he puts it on himself.

The successful teacher, therefore, does not set himself above his class but makes himself a part of it, retaining his authority by sympathetic comradeship and the knowledge of God's word. If he is a man who can take the initiative in aggressive service, he stirs them to work by drawing their hearts and showing them by example how to become efficient

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law."

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SIMPLICITY AND CLEARNESS ARE BETTER THAN A SHOW OF LEARNING

Some one has said that, “‘Sequipedalian’ words are always bad for children and all plain people.” It is foolish for a teacher to exploit his scholarship before a class of young people and bewilder their minds with explanations and theories that they do not understand. It is also an evidence of conceit. The teacher is a messenger of God and should not seek to display his powers in delivering his message, but seek rather to make the purpose of his Lord clear to the hearts of those to whom he speaks. A show of learning is, after all, nothing more than an exhibition. “To the weak I became weak,” said the Apostle. “I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some.”

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In olden times the Levites read the word of God in a way that left no doubt in the minds of the people as to its meaning. "They read in the book, in the law of God distinctly (with an interpretation), and they gave the sense so that they understood the reading."

Explaining profound truths in simple language is better than teaching simple truth in profound language. Stilts do not make any man taller, they only lift his body and make his walking unsteady. The teacher who tries to show his learning tempts pupils to disrespect. If he talks above their heads they grow listless, if he wades beyond his depth they will seek to make him flounder by asking irrelevant questions.

"If the trumpet give an uncertain voice, who shall prepare himself for war? So also ye, unless ye utter by

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the tongue speech easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken, for ye will be speaking unto the air?"

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool that he may become wise."

LOVE IS TRIUMPHANT

God does not set a premium on dullness. A dry-as-dust teacher will be wearisome to his scholars no matter how great his piety, and there is no virtue in weariness. Therefore, every person who has charge of a class should strive to make his work interesting, impressive, and instructive; but should not forget that, while brightness holds the attention, earnestness impresses the mind, and instruction builds the character, love alone is triumphant. Though he should "speak with the tongues of men and of angels" and "have not love," his words will be as "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

While "the best cause requires a good pleader," it will not endure a dishonest one, so that love's importunity cannot be feigned. He who attempts

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to masquerade with virtue is false both to himself and to the cause that he represents. The only kind of love that is potent is “love without dissimulation.” The scholars of a class may forget their teacher’s explanations, illustrations, and lesson applications, but they will not forget his love. “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, and the greatest of these is love.”

Is the teacher’s patience taxed? “Love suffereth long,” Is he inclined to fret and scold? “Love doth not behave itself unseemly.” Is he disposed to harshness and severity? Love “is kind.” Is his temper tried? Love “is not provoked.” Is he met by indifference and coldness? Love “endureth all things.” Is he burdened with obligations? Love “beareth all things.” Is he discouraged and ready to give up? Love hopeth all things.” On the other hand, has he been more

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successful than others in the school? “Love vaunteth not itself.” And has he been greatly encouraged in his work? Love “is not puffed up.”

“God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.”

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IT IS WELL TO REMEMBER THE NATURAL ORDER OF TEACHING

The natural order of teaching is, first, explanation; second, application; and third, exhortation.

Next to the power of loving, the teacher's highest qualification is the ability to instruct. He must know the truth by personal experience and the study of the Bible and have the ability to make its meaning and application plain to the hearts of his pupils. If he is in earnest, he will not only pray for those under his charge, but will also seek to so expound the Scriptures that God will be able to answer his prayers through his words. "The wind can do him no good who steers for no port." If he wants to reach the hearts of his scholars he must steer in that direction.

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The word, "cant," originally meant a beggar's whine; it now stands for insincere professional talk. Carlyle called it "double distilled lying." Let no teacher think it necessary to mar a lesson by any kind of forced pious pleading. If he does, the boys or girls in his class will consider his entreaty as, "Sunday School cant." Honest exposition with practical application and words of sincere loving counsel will be all sufficient.

When it seems desirable to speak to a pupil personally regarding Christ's claim on his life, it should be done in private. The presence of a parent, pastor, friend, or a classmate would be an intrusion. It might be found desirable to introduce some wise counselor with the scholar's consent on a subsequent occasion, but the initial appeal should be when alone with the pupil.

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Let every Sunday School teacher do his work in a way that will please his Lord and look forward to the time when he will hear the words of divine commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

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